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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MANILA 002590

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR S/CT/CHANDLER AND EAP/PMBS  
STATE ALSO FOR DS/DSS/ATA/VANCIO, SCHNAIBLE, AND SCHEEL  
NSC FOR GREEN  
DOD/ISA/EA FOR ALLEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: STAYING ENGAGED WITH COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

REF: A. MANILA 1614

[B](#). MANILA 2434

[C](#). MANILA 2105

[D](#). MANILA 2108

[E](#). MANILA 1792

[F](#). 04 MANILA 5502

Classified By: (U) Political Officer Paul O'Friel  
for reasons 1.4(b), (c) and (d).

[1](#). (S) SUMMARY. US counterterrorism assistance, ranging from operations/intelligence fusion support for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to RMAS' involvement with the Philippine National Police (PNP), has helped the Philippines register some counterterrorism successes in 2004 and 2005. While we have tremendous access here, continued, sustained engagement is needed if we want to ensure that the GRP turns the corner on terrorism. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (S) The Philippines continues to be one of the hotbeds of terrorism in East Asia, with the active presence here of three US designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Jemaah Islamiyah (JI); the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG); and the Communist Party of the Philippines/New Peoples Army (CPP/NPA) (ref A). Active US engagement has helped the GRP score some anti-terrorism successes in 2004 and 2005.

US MILITARY ASSISTANCE MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
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[3](#). (S) In a series of near-misses in November 2004 and January and April 2005 the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) narrowly avoided eliminating Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) operative Dulmatin, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader Khaddafy Janjalani, and other major terrorist targets. In each case, the AFP conducted after-action reviews and attempted to apply lessons learned to subsequent operations. It also used the US-trained Light Reaction Companies of the Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG) in combat for the first time against terrorist targets in Central Mindanao in the April raid. This action involved night movement to contact and night helicopter-borne insertion of forces. US doctrine and advice has begun to shape and influence AFP thinking and operations. SouthCom has demonstrated a growing willingness to integrate Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) Operations/Intelligence fusion support into its operations, and continued Operations/Intelligence Fusion Team (OIFT) support is needed to bolster AFP counterterrorism efforts.

[4](#). (C) US-trained light infantry battalions have also demonstrated improved combat mettle. The 27th Infantry Battalion in a January 3-16, 2005 operation in Mindanao's Kraan River Valley killed three ASG terrorists and wounded 10 more, disrupting ASG safe havens in the area. The SouthCom Commander, Lieutenant General Braganza, directly attributed the success of the operation, which involved a night envelopment, to US training, saying "the assistance of US military experts has produced outstanding results."

[5](#). (C) In seeking to tackle the root causes of terrorism, JSTOF-P has under consideration a comprehensive plan to bolster AFP civil-military operations capabilities in the Sulu Archipelago and Central Mindanao. The US effort would support the AFP's own program to improve its ability to meet the needs of disaffected populations in conflict-affected areas. This type of engagement, in synergy with existing USAID efforts, can make a real difference over the long term.

RMAS SUPPORT CRITICAL TO PNP SUCCESSES  
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[6](#). (S/NF) RMAS support for the Philippine National Police (PNP) and AFP intelligence services has proven key to breaking apart ASG and JI networks. Arrests in March 2004 disrupted an ASG plot to attack the US Embassy and conduct terror bombings in Metro Manila. The subsequent apprehension of Khair Malvan Mundus in May of that year broke an important

link in the ASG's ties with its foreign financiers. RMAS' continued close engagement likewise was a significant factor in the aftermath of the February 14, 2005 "Valentine's Day" bombings that rocked Manila and Mindanao. Follow-up PNP operations derailed further attacks by the JI/ASG that were designed to replicate the December 2000 bombing campaign in Manila.

#### ATA TRAINING PROVES ITS WORTH

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17. (S) Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) trained hostage negotiators and crisis response teams played a crucial role in the GRP's reaction to the attempted mass jailbreak of ASG prisoners from the Bureau of Jail Management detention facility in Bicutan. The PNP's Special Action Force (SAF) was able to retake the prison and restore order with the loss of only one SAF trooper. Post's proposed expanded ATA program (ref B) would focus on building up the capabilities of the existing interagency Anti-Terrorism Task Force to serve as the dedicated national-level response team for terrorist attacks.

#### REWARD PROGRAMS HAVE AN IMPACT

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18. (S) DoD Rewards and Rewards for Justice (RFJ) payouts in 2004 and the ongoing DoD Rewards advertising program were developed and executed in close coordination with AFP and Department of National Defense counterparts. These initiatives have begun to attack the web of social, religious, and cultural ties upon which Janjalani and other terrorists have long relied for their safety and freedom. Post has proposed adding JI terrorist bombers Dulmatin and Umar Patek to State's RFJ list (refs C and D).

#### US SUGGESTIONS INCORPORATED INTO ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION

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19. (C) Intervention by the Political Section and the Department of Justice Attache has helped shape the GRP's pending anti-terrorism bill, a major US foreign policy objective. Executive and legislative branch contacts have quietly welcomed US proposals and incorporated them into draft legislation. Defense Secretary Cruz, who is shepherding the bill through Congress, predicts it will be passed by yearend 2005.

#### USAID PROGRAMS ATTACK ROOT CAUSES

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10. (U) This year, USAID completed its highly successful Livelihood Enhancement and Peace (LEAP) Program, which reintegrated nearly 28,000 former Moro National Liberation Front (MILF) combatants back into society. This type of assistance, which attacks some of the base causes of terrorism, could play a similar role in reintegrating Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighters should the GRP's peace talks with the MILF prove successful.

#### STAYING ENGAGED

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11. (S) These examples underline the importance of staying engaged in the counterterrorism fight here. Our involvement makes a difference, and our absence would be telling. In the decade of the 1990's after the closure of the US bases, Ramzi Youseff, Khalid Sheikh Mohamed, JI operatives, and other terrorists stepped into the vacuum created by the diminished US presence. Continued, targeted US counterterrorism assistance makes sense, has an impact, and serves US interests. Proposals, such as our suggested enhanced ATA program (ref B), Streamlined Terrorism Prosecution Program (ref E) and Management Assistance for the Philippine Police - MAPP (ref F), aim to bolster and improve counterterrorism cooperation, as does our support for Philippine Defense Reform.

12. (S) While the Philippines may be a complex challenge, it is one of the few countries in East Asia, if not globally, where US personnel and military forces have such wide access and influence. While Philippine institutions are weak, our presence here does make a difference. Sustained long-term US engagement is essential to defeating terrorism in the Philippines and safeguarding the US homeland.

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